

Wallace to Undergo Operation Sunday

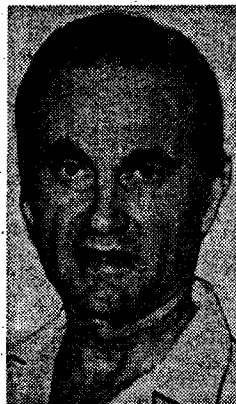
By Thomas O'Toole
Washington Post Staff Writer

Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace will undergo surgery Sunday at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring for removal of the bullet that has been lodged in his spine for the past month.

The decision to operate on Wallace was taken yesterday by doctors encouraged by his progress in recovering from the lingering abdominal infection he has suffered from since an assassin's bullet was removed from his stomach the night of May 15. Gov. Wallace was shot four times that day after speaking at a rally in Laurel.

"The governor is almost fully recovered and he's gained back five of the 20 pounds he's lost as a result of the infection," one doctor close to the governor said in explaining the decision to operate again on Sunday. "In view of his progress, we decided to remove the second bullet right now."

If Gov. Wallace sails through Sunday's surgery



GEORGE C. WALLACE

...recovering from infection

without complications, there is a good chance he will be fit enough to attend the Democratic National Convention, which begins July 10 in Miami Beach. "We fully expect that with a good recovery he will be in Miami," said press secretary Billy Joe Camp.

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WALLACE, From A1

Barring surgical complications, Wallace might stay another week to 10 days at Holy Cross Hospital after the operation and then rest up at his home in Montgomery, Ala., doctors said. He could then attend the convention in Miami, though his paralyzed legs would keep him in a wheelchair and his weakened condition might keep him from making more than token appearances at the convention. Wallace has been paralyzed from the waist down by the bullet.

According to his aides, Wallace hopes to arrive in Miami the day the convention begins or possibly the day before.

His appearance seems likely to serve as an emotional rally for his supporters and possibly make it tougher for the other Democratic presidential

candidates to bargain for his delegates. The governor is said by aides to be anxious to address the convention but the prospect of any real speech-making appears doubtful.

The operation to remove the bullet from Gov. Wallace's spinal canal will do nothing to restore feeling or movement to his legs, according to some medical sources, but it will remove the risk of a spinal infection that could complicate his recovery and might even threaten his life.

"If the bullet doesn't come out an abscess might form around the bullet that could turn into spinal meningitis," one neurosurgeon explained. "If that happened, the infection could spread up the spinal cord and even to the covering of the brain."

Wallace will be operated on sometime Sunday morning by Dr. Baltazar E. Perez and Dr. J. Garber Galbraith, both neu-

rosurgeons. Dr. Perez is on the staff at Holy Cross and Dr. Galbraith is from the University of Alabama Medical School in Birmingham.

The decision not to move Wallace to Birmingham for the spinal surgery came as something of a surprise, since his aides and his wife Cornelia had said several times that the second operation would be done in Birmingham.

What decided Wallace to have the operation at Holy Cross, doctors said, were a "lot of little things"—like the fact that he was getting such good treatment at Holy Cross, that he had grown fond of the hospital staff and felt at home in the hospital. Camp also was quoted as saying that many tests for the operation already have been completed at Holy Cross.

"It's also medically sound to keep him in Holy Cross," one doctor said. "There would be

no real medical advantage in moving him somewhere else for a second operation."

The operation to remove the bullet from the spine will be delicate but not difficult according to medical authorities. Doctors expect the surgery to last no more than two hours, most of which will be taken up by the physical removal of the slug from his spinal canal.

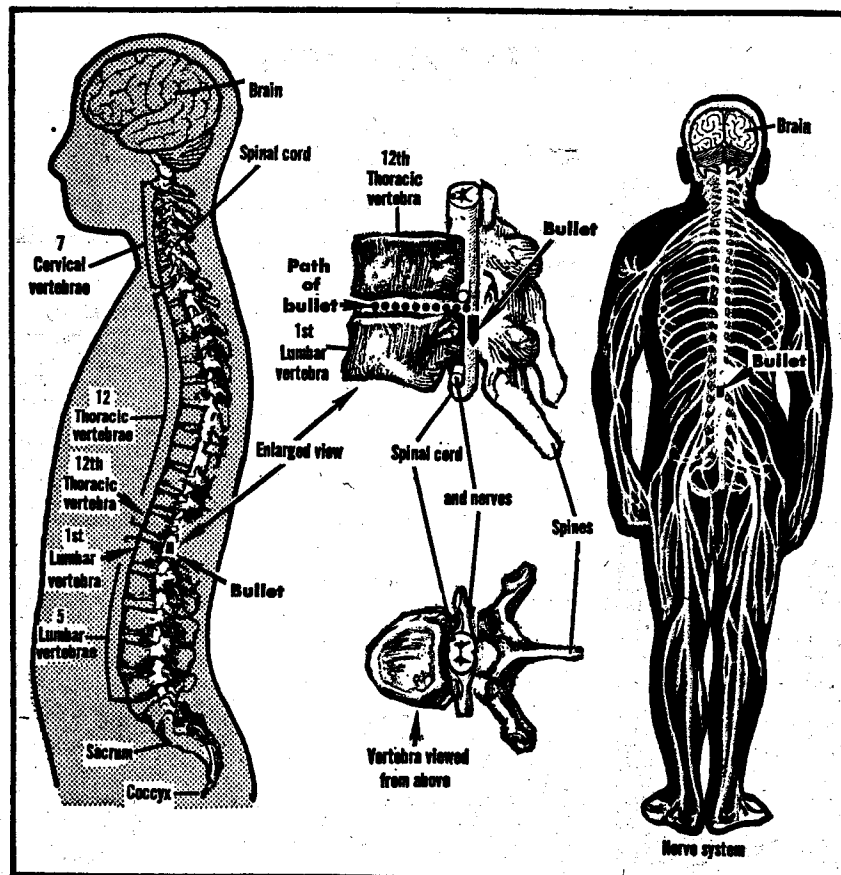
When the spine is exposed and the bullet removed, doctors will find out for the first time the full extent of the damage to Wallace's spinal cord. Doctors who have seen the x-rays have said that the spinal cord is at least half cut and may in fact be cut all the way through.

Whatever the damage to the spinal cord, it cannot be repaired by surgery. The nervous tissue of the spinal cord does not regenerate itself. Once destroyed, it is destroyed forever.

The most delicate part of Sunday's surgery will be removal of the bullet, which lies in the spinal canal between the first lumbar vertebra and the 12th thoracic vertebra. Wallace will be on his stomach throughout the operation, which is technically called a laminectomy.

There is very little room in that part of the back for surgeons to operate. The spinal cord is less than an inch wide, and the doctors will have to retract the cord and move aside the nerve roots around it and tease the bullet out.

Wallace's accused assailant, Arthur H. Bremer, a 21-year old former busboy from Milwaukee, is being held in Baltimore County Jail on state and federal charges stemming from the shooting of Wallace and three others at the Laurel rally.



Diagrams show bullet lodged in Gov. Wallace's spine. Doctors will remove it Sunday.